# THE NATIONAL PURE FOOD LAW AND THE AMERICAN CONSUMER

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Radio Talk delivered by Solon R. Barber, In Charge, Information Service, Food & Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, at Station W J B O, New Orleans, March 22, 1932.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Station W J B O at New Orleans today brings you, under the auspices of the Federal Business Association of this City, a talk by Mr. Solon R. Barber, of the Federal Food & Drug Administration. Mr. Barber, whose headquarters are at Washington, is paying a visit to the Administration's New Orleans field inspection station, located in the Customhouse, 423 Canal St. He is going to tell you what the enforcement of the National food and drug law does to protect your family budget and medicine cabinet.
Mr. Barber - -

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Through the courtesy of Station W J B O of New Orleans and thanks to the auspices of the Federal Business Association of this city, I am able today, ladies and gentlemen, to describe for you some of the meanings of the operations of the national pure food and drug law and to outline for you some of the activities of those who enforce that law. The enforcement of the Federal food and drugs act is of vital concern to every man, woman and child in the land.

Enacted by Congress more than 25 years ago, the Federal food and drugs act has, to date, served the original purpose of Congress in that it has brought about a vast and gratifying improvement in the quality and honesty of labeling of foods and drugs on the American market. The six other laws enforced by the Food and Drug Administration are of more recent enactment, and I do not plan to speak of them at this time. Doubtless you will hear about their enforcement, in the future, from E. C. Boudreaux, Chief of the Administration's New Orleans Station.

I have just come from the offices of the Food & Drug Administration's New Orleans Station, at 423 Canal St. I might say that you will find the Chief of the Station, Mr. Boudreaux, always glad to see you if you desire to pay him a visit. I walked up the one flight of stairs -- there is, of course, an elevator, to the laboratories where Messrs. Gnagy (G-nagy), Deal, Freeman, Haller, and Falck - Station Chemists- were busy analyzing samples of foods and drugs to see that they comply with the strict requirements of the pure food and drug law. On one table I saw a number of bottles of so-called peach, cherry, and apricot cordials. These beverages were not true fruit cordials at all -- they were out-and-out imitations. But they were not labeled as "imitations". They were composed largely of artificial color and flavor, water, and a very small quantity of fruit juice. The food law requires that imitation fruit juices and cordials be labeled as such. When you go to the store to buy a bottle of apricot cordial, for example, you have a right to get, for your money, the genuine article.

On another table there was a line-up of cans of oysters. One of the chemists had drained the oysters and was carefully measuring the contents to see that the quantity-of-contents statement - required by the food law to be printed on all packages of food -- was correct. A person buying a can of oysters labeled, for example, as containing 5 ounces, should receive 5 ounces -- and no less.

In another part of the laboratory one of Uncle Sam's specialists was

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checking up to see whether there was any possible residue of spray on a sample of vegetables which had been shipped in interstate commerce. As you all know, it is necessary to spray vegetables and fruits with chemicals in order to check the ravages of insect pests -- enemies of farmers and planters -- which are a constant handicap to the most efficient growing of vegetables and fruits. Some of the sprays now commonly used contain lead arsenate, harmful to health. The food law requires that, before any fruit or vegetable legally can be shipped for sale from one State to another, it must contain no trace of a spray which could be harmful to the human consumer.

I have said that the Federal food and drugs act requires that all packages of food be labeled with statements which will inform the buyer as to how much food the package contains. This is for your protection. You should not expect to pay for 16 ounces of food and then receive only 12 ounces. Many buyers, I have found, are not careful about reading labels. Many buy, guided largely by the sense or sight -- gauging, that way, comparative sizes of packages. Just before I left Washington I saw a sample box of grated cocoanut. The box was about 9 inches high, approximately 4 inches wide, around 3 inches deep. A housewife, buying such a package, would logically expect to get a filled package -- or to be exact, 108 cubic inches of grated cocoanut. We slit the cardboard box open, and removed the contents. The grated cocoanut was wrapped in a compact, rectangular package, in oiled paper. The actual contents occupied about two-thirds of the box -- or, about 72 cubic inches. We have another exhibit in our laboratories in Washington. Two bottles of Vanilla Extract. One bottle, rectangular in shape, and about 3 inches tall, actually contains twice as much extract as a bottle almost 2 inches taller, but of equal width and breadth. The larger bottle is modeled in such a way as to contain only about half as much vanilla as the smaller one. The purchaser, not reading the printed letters on the label, would expect to get more Vanilla in the larger bottle than in the smaller one. I read the labels on those two bottles. The words, "2 ounces", were printed on the label of the smaller bottle. The larger one was labeled as containing "1 ounce".

I have mentioned only one or two examples of activities at the New Orleans Station of your Food & Drug Administration. It is the duty of E. C. Boudreaux and his aides -- working in conjunction with the 17 other Stations maintained by the Administration, with headquarters at Washington -- to make sure that every single shipment of foods and drugs entering into his territory comply with the law. Briefly, the food law requires that foods be pure, wholesome, unadulterated, honestly labeled, and that they contain no substances harmful to health. That law requires that drugs be pure and unadulterated, and that medicines be not labeled with false curative claims. It is the duty of officials at your New Orleans Station -- as well as of all officials connected with the Food & Drug Administration -- to see that all foods and drugs entering into interstate, import, or export trade meet the law's requirements. One of the big jobs of the New Orleans Station -- which covers a territory including the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and parts of Texas and Florida -- is to inspect all imported foods and drugs. The Government's food and drug men in New Orleans have their fingers on the pulse of a great import trade. They have to have. A brief mention of a few of the foods that are imported into this country through New Orleans makes a most interesting and varied bill-of-fare. These foods include olives from Spain, Greece, Italy, and the Holy Land. Sardines from the colder northern countries. Small pear-shaped tomatoes, in cans, from Italy. Olive oil from Spain, France, and Italy. Glaced fruits from France. Chilis from Mexico. Coffee from Brazil

and the Central Americas. Canned fruits and vegetables -- crude drugs, and medicinal preparations -- from a hundred and one foreign countries. All of these must go through the routine Government inspection, and, if any shipments are found to be violative under the law, the imports are detained or re-exported.

One of the most vital activities of Government officers who enforce the Pure Food & Drugs Act is to check on shipments of drugs and medicines. There was a day in this country, ladies and gentlemen, when colored water and bread pills were sold as cures for almost anything -- from chillblains to leprosy. There was a day when woefully unqualified quacks traveled around the country in buck-boards -- selling their goods. Most of these men advertised themselves as "Doctors" or "Professors", and their usual slogan was "Nature's Great Wonder Worker", or "Nature's True Healer". Perhaps if the people who bought these so-called "medical" delicatessen could have seen how they were mixed up they would not have been so eager to buy. While the "Professor" was entertaining his audience with parlor tricks or stale jokes, his helper was behind the buggy, mixing up the "healer" -- in a tub. Thanks to 25 years' enforcement of the Federal food and drugs act, these corn doctors and charlatans have largely disappeared. While so-called "patent medicines" -- many of genuine worth in the treatment of disease -- are still sold, there is, today, a very slim chance that the American buyer will be deceived as he was deceived a quarter of a century ago. It is true that a man can sell a worthless patent medicine today. But he cannot, legally, sell a medicine labeled with curative claims which are false and fraudulent. Remember -- the Food & Drugs Act has jurisdiction only over what is printed upon the label of medicinal preparations, and then, only when these are shipped beyond State borders, or imported, or exported. In other words, if a man labels his medicine as having curative value for, let us say, malaria, and if that preparation does not have any therapeutic worth in the treatment of Malaria, he certainly will run afoul of the law and be liable to prosecution by the Federal Government.

I am frequently asked why worthless medicines are still advertised and sold. Well, there are three answers to that question. First, the Food & Drug Administration, enforcing the pure food and drugs law, has no jurisdiction whatsoever over foods and drugs which are manufactured and sold within a single State of the Union. Many States, however, have laws which control such traffic within their own borders. Second, the Food & Drugs Act has no jurisdiction whatsoever over what we call "outside advertising". The law applies only to statements printed upon the labels of the package, or upon accompanying circulars, and then only when the article enters into interstate commerce. Third, there have always been, and always will be, certain shysters in the food-- and drug- manufacturing fields who will take chances with the law -- who will violate it -- and who will go out of business before they are apprehended. The law, however, has teeth. Federal food and drug officials are on the job. Since the Federal food and drugs act was passed, the Government has instituted proceedings against nearly 18,500 violators. That is approximately 740 legal actions for each year of the law's existence.

I want to say, in conclusion, that I have enjoyed my stay in this charming city of New Orleans. I thank the Federal Business Association and Station W J B O for this opportunity to talk to you -- and I thank you all for your kind attention.

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